

**Powys County Council  
Scrutiny Report Template**

<b>Committee:</b>	Economy, Residents and Communities
<b>Date:</b>	11.12.23
<b>Subject:</b>	Update on Powys Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

**1. Who will be the Lead Officer(s) / Lead Cabinet Member(s) presenting the report?**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Role:</b>
Cllr Matthew Dorrance	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for a Fairer Powys
Andy Thompson	Interim Head of Housing
Richard Batt	Service Manager – Housing Communities

**2. Why is the Scrutiny Committee being asked to consider the subject?**

Understand the resource and operational implications for the Council, as a statutory housing authority, of the Powys Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

**3. Role of the Committee:**

**The role of the Committee in considering the subject is to:**

Consider how the Council is working, and planning ahead, to meet its current and predicted obligations as set out in the Powys Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

**4. Key Scrutiny Questions:**

**What Key areas should the Committee focus on:**

The extent to which currently available resources will be able to meet current and predicted demand.

**5. Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members:**

**To assist the Committee when scrutinising the topic:**

- 5.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities :
- 5.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality  
**[focus on value]**
- 5.3 A look at any risks  
**[focus on risk]**
- 5.4 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:
  - Long term
  - Prevention
  - Integration
  - Collaboration
  - Involvement**[focus on wellbeing and future generations]**

5.5 The potential impacts the decision would have on:

- protected groups under the Equality Act 2010
- those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (when making strategic decisions)
- opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language [focus on equality and the Welsh language]

**[focus on equality and Welsh Language]**

**Key Feeders (tick all that apply)**

Strategic Risk		Cabinet Work Plan	
Director / Head of Service Key Issue	Y	External / Internal Inspection	
Existing Commitment / Annual Report		Performance / Finance Issue	
Suggestion from Public		Referral from Council / Committee	
Corporate Improvement Plan	Y	Impacting Public / other services	Y
Service Integrated Business Plan	Y		
Suggestion from Members			
Partnerships	Y		

# CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

## Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Report Author:** County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for a Fairer Powys

**Lead Officer:** Richard Batt, Service Manager – Housing Communities

**Report Title:** Update on Powys Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

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**Report For:** **Information**

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### 1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update of the delivery of the 2023-24 Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

### 2. Background

2.1: The Council's 2023/28 Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) sets out how Powys County Council and its partners will work together over the next 5 years to prevent homelessness and where not possible move people swiftly through temporary accommodation and into a settled home with the provision of multi-agency support tailored to meet individual circumstances (*right home with the right support*).

2.2: As reflected in the RRTP, while for most people, a home of their own where they live independently is the intention, others may choose supported accommodation on a medium or long-term basis. On the understanding that rapid rehousing is an approach that works for everyone such individuals will be moved into the appropriate supported housing as quickly as possible, but a focus remains on independent living in the future.

2.3: The RRTP contains a number of key underlying principles which are shaping the Council's rapid rehousing approach, namely:-

- Avoidance of households and individuals seeing homelessness as a route into housing.
- Households in housing need who approach the Council take the lead wherever possible in improving their housing circumstances.
- Wherever possible individuals accommodated in appropriately sized property on a temporary basis whilst a homelessness and support needs assessment is conducted, but on successful conclusion of those assessments, rather than move on, the accommodation is turned over to that person as a permanent tenancy - with a tailored support package as required.

2.4: While the RRTP has a 5 year focus, it also contains a number of initial priorities these are:-

- Introduction of two 'Instant Access 24/7 Triage Centres'.
- Introduction of two 'Interim 24/7 Supported Accommodation Schemes'.
- Provision of modular interim accommodation.
- Converting 'flipping' suitable temporary accommodation to a secure contract.
- Introduction of a homeless triage (first point of contact) service.
- Further embedding a trauma informed approach to service delivery.

### 3. Advice

#### 3.1 Progress made in delivering against the RRTP initial priorities

- Introduction of two 'Instant Access 24/7 Triage Centres':- It is envisaged that such provision will improve early intervention and homeless prevention through enabling a rounded multi-agency assessment of housing and support needs of homeless clients and where needed immediately available safe and secure temporary accommodation for those who are homeless while appropriate move on plans to the right type of housing are put in place. The capital funding for such provision has been secured and Housing Services are currently exploring suitable sites which when identified would require the relevant revenue budget(s) to be in place for the building of these sites to progress.
- Introduction of two 'Interim 24/7 Supported Accommodation Schemes':- This will provide supported, self-contained accommodation for those whose needs are sufficiently complex that they are not able, without having the time and environment in which to develop life-skills and have put in place appropriate support, to move straight into independent living in the community. As with the proposed triage centre provision, capital funding has been secured and once the relevant sites for the build have been identified relevant revenue budget(s) would also need to be put in place.
- Provision of modular interim accommodation:- The provision of such modular accommodation will off-set the need for the continued high use of expensive Bed & Breakfast as emergency accommodation (as of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2023 there were 45 homeless households in B&B). While capital funding has also been secured for this modular provision (20 units), it's actual delivery once an appropriate 'meanwhile' (*land earmarked for 'bricks & mortar' new build*) site has been identified will require the same level of planning consent as that need for more traditional new build housing.
- Converting 'flipping' suitable temporary accommodation to a secure contract (permanent tenancy):- As a result of agreed amendments to the Homes in Powys Allocations Policy over 40 homeless households who have a full (Section 75) Homeless Duty and have a clear local connection are in the process of flipping their current temporary accommodation to a secure contract.
- Introduction of a homeless triage (first point of contact) service:- Housing Services have recently refocused the work of its' Housing Support Officers to provide timely advise at the point of a homeless presentation to fully explore available housing options, agree actions to meet current un-met support needs and maintain current accommodation wherever possible. The impact of this change of focus is already having a positive impact of homeless caseloads as evidenced by overall homeless cases have reduced between 31/07/22 and 26/11/23 from 519 to 404 (22.2% reduction) and over the same period statutory homeless cases have reduced from 370 to 263 (28.9% reduction).
- Further embedding a trauma informed approach to service delivery:- It is recognised that Housing Services staff are increasingly exposed to challenging behaviours from traumatised individuals who are often in traumatic situations which could over time lead to indirect/secondary (vicarious) traumatic stress and therefore we have in place a number of mitigating actions to minimise the impact on our staff's health and safety. These actions include:-
  - Timely debriefs between individual staff and their line-manager to unpack those individual challenging/stressful situations as quickly as practicably possible to minimise the negative impact on the member of staff.
  - Reflective practice staff have through current 1-2-1s and team meetings where in addition to performance reviews, time is taken for staff to take a step back and think

- about their roles, including what is going well/not so well, how they are feeling and by extension how they make others feel.
- Raising staff awareness regarding how to access 'Care First' to get that employee assistance with those personal challenges which may be impacting on their health, wellbeing, and performance.

#### **4.0 Resource Implications**

- 4.1 During 2022/23, the Council Homeless Service incurred a £1,242,940.58 net cost which was met from the Council's General Fund (both Housing and Benefits budgets). A key contributory factor to this net cost was the high use of Bed & Breakfast (B&B) which attracts much higher net weekly cost than self-contained temporary accommodation. The projected number of households that will be placed in B&B during 2023/24 indicates a similar level of net cost despite an increase in special Welsh Government funding to help local authorities manage the rising levels of homelessness.
- 4.2 Turning into reality the vision set out in the Powys Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2023-2028 requires adequate resourcing to be made available by a range of agencies and organisation. This is because the plan represents a step change in the approach taken to preventing and where prevention isn't possible, resolving homelessness. Included in the plan are projects, actions and initiatives that may require the allocation of resources by the Council. All such projects, actions and initiatives will be subject to bespoke business cases and reports presented for consideration to the Portfolio Holder for Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for a Fairer Powys, Cabinet or Full Council, in accord with the Council's constitution.
- 4.3 The Welsh Government is providing support through a range of grant programmes both revenue ('Homelessness Prevention', 'No-one left out' and Housing Support Grant) and capital (Social Housing Grant and Transitional Accommodation Capital Grant). These programmes are seen as being complementary to the expectation that local authorities adequately fund their statutory homelessness duties. These duties include the provision of advice and assistance for homeless households, temporary accommodation of all types at both the initial time of being homeless and where needed interim accommodation until permanent housing can be secured, liaison and relationship management with landlords and property providers to prevent the loss of and, where needed, to secure homes for homeless households and the administration and management of all such services. These obligations, which are funded within the General Fund, rest on all local authorities, including those which are no longer social landlords.
- 4.4 In time, the Powys Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2023-2028 should help maintain downward pressure on overall costs as people are housing more quickly, although this does depend upon there being sufficient homes available in the wider housing system. Powys County Council has in place a strong programme to add to the net availability of homes in the county, including building Council-owned homes, bringing empty properties into use as homes, supporting developers to provide social housing through its Package Deal policy and encouraging housing associations to build homes.

- 4.5 Two of the projects required to make a success of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, and which require a financial commitment from the Council and where appropriate the Welsh Government, are:
- Enhanced Homelessness Services, which includes ‘Instant Access 24/7 Triage Centres’ and ‘Interim 24/7 Supported Accommodation’.
  - Modular Interim Accommodation.
- 4.6 Business Cases have been completed for ‘Enhanced Homelessness Services’, which includes ‘Instant Access 24/7 Triage Centres’ and ‘Interim 24/7 Supported Accommodation’, and for ‘Modular Interim Accommodation’. Provision for the capital investment associated with these projects has been included within the Council’s Capital Programme for future years, which was approved by Council as part of the budget setting process. The capital funding is therefore allocated and available.
- 4.7 The revenue elements of the ‘Instant Access 24/7 Triage Centres’ and ‘Interim 24/7 Supported Accommodation’, projects will be addressed through the Financial Resource Modelling (FRM) and budget setting process for 2024-2025 onwards, as there is no base budget for the expenditure in the current year, although there may be spend to save opportunities once the financial analysis is complete.
- 4.8 The ‘Modular Interim Accommodation’ project will start in the current financial year, with the appointment of a Development Officer who will explore and identify potential sites, research the available suppliers, liaise with the Welsh Government and undertake the preparatory work to secure the necessary planning and regulatory consents.
- 4.8 The Deputy Head of Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer) previously commented on the intention of the intention of the proposed projects to bring down the cost of homelessness. It was noted that the current service is overspending and there is no funding for these projects, although the projects are likely to support the reduction of that overspend and will be worthy of consideration as each business case is reviewed.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 Legal implications regarding the introduction of the RRTP have previously been reviewed by the Housing Solicitor, with comments set out below in paragraphs 6.1.1
- 6.1.1 Rapid Rehousing Plan – Any additional accommodation that can be sourced to assist the Council with their statutory duties around homelessness should be supported. There is a greater need for one bed properties and furthermore there is an increase in the number of presentations by applicants with additional support needs. The triage centres proposed would assist greatly with signposting and providing support quickly.
- 6.2 The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer has previously commented regarding the introduction of the RRTP “the recommendation can be supported from a legal perspective”.

## **7.0 Data Protection**

7.1 The information contained in this report do not involve the processing of personal data.

## **8.0 Comment from local member(s)**

8.1 The matters covered in this report have equal effect across all Council wards.

## **9.0 Integrated Impact Assessment**

9.1 An Impact Assessment has been completed for the 2023-2028 Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which identified no adverse equalities impact through its' implementation.

9.1 The delivery of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan will assist Housing Services in supporting the Powys Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan 'Stronger, Fairer, Greener', in particular by proactively preventing homelessness and minimising the negative impact of unsuitable accommodation on individual's health and wellbeing.

## **9. Recommendation**

- To note the contents of this report

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